

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 172 219

CS 204 872

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 TITLE John Milton's Place in Journalism History: Champion or Turncoat?
 PUB DATE Aug 79
 NOTE 22p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism (62nd, Houston, Texas, August 5-9, 1979)
 EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
 DESCRIPTORS *Censorship; Civil Rights; *European History; *Freedom of Speech; Intellectual History; *Journalism; News Media
 IDENTIFIERS *Milton (John)

ABSTRACT

Historians of journalism cite John Milton's speech "Areopagitica" as the first major English-language document to articulate the ideas of free speech and freedom of the press. Milton's reputation as spokesman for freedom to publish is sullied, however, by his having served as Cromwell's press licensor. Historians of journalism have attacked Milton's "censorship" as evidence of contradiction and compromise of his ideals. An examination of the nature of his responsibility as licensor within his social, political, and personal situation leads to a different conclusion, however: that his commitment to the ideal of just and virtuous government gave him warrant for direct involvement in the political life of the Commonwealth, and that in his role as licensor, he merely played the role of senior editor rather than authoritarian censor, and contributed little aside from his bureaucratic imprimatur. (DF)

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JOHN MILTON'S PLACE IN JOURNALISM HISTORY:

CHAMPION OR TURNCOAT?

by

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JOHN MILTON'S PLACE IN JOURNALISM HISTORY:

CHAMPION OR TURNCOAT?

In the autumn of 1644, John Milton, learned traveller and writer of poetry and anti-episcopal tracts, undertook to compose a speech¹ addressed to Parliament in support of free expression. It was not the first document to defend free inquiry,² but it was and perhaps still is the most eloquent piece of English prose ever to attack the oppressive strictures of censorship.

Events leading up to Areopagitica carried no portent of their subsequent historic value. A commonplace domestic dispute furnished the occasion. In 1642 the 33-year-old scholar took a teenage bride, and his contemplative, demanding nature contravened his wife's youthful unsettledness. Three months after their vows they separated. Mary returned to her parents while John set about laying the intellectual and theological groundwork for what he projected would be their inevitable divorce. The result was a tract called Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce published in August, 1643, with three more following. He argued that marriage, a strictly civil bond, was justifiably cancelled when partners were spiritually incompatible.³ The tracts did nothing to change established views on divorce. Instead, they provoked the ire of the Westminster divines, who preached against them and lobbied in Parliament for stricter enforcement of the licensing laws to prevent similarly outrageous documents from ever appearing again.⁴ The independent Milton cherished no fondness for ecclesiastical hierarchy, and his response to the Westminster Assembly is the now famous Areopagitica.

Most students of journalism become familiar with Milton's ringing phrases: "he who destroys a good book kills reason itself," "let her and Falsehood grapple; who ever knew Truth put to the worse in a free and open encounter?", "Give me the liberty to know, to utter, to argue freely according to conscience, above all liberties." They express values that have come to be identified with the highest ideals of modern democracy. Historians of journalism cite Areopagitica as a watershed of Western civilization, the first major English document to articulate what the following three and a quarter centuries have so painfully struggled to institute and defend. Emery and Emery applaud Milton's "most perfect expression" of the idea of free speech. Fredrick Siebert calls Areopagitica a "literary monument to intellectual liberty." Elbert N. S. Thompson's classic study cited Milton as "the author of the grandest plea for the freedom of the press."⁵

But Milton's reputation as spokesman for freedom to publish is sullied by events of far greater historic magnitude than those which temporarily spoiled the quietude of his home. During the 1640s, the Puritan Revolution was challenging the foundations of British government. When Cromwell finally succeeded in displacing Charles I, Milton enthusiastically rallied to the Puritan cause. Through the influence of John Bradshaw,⁶ first president of the Council of State and chief judge at Charles's trial, Milton was offered the job of Secretary for Foreign Tongues, a position which involved no policy-making responsibility but nevertheless carried status above that of mere stenographer or factotum.

The appointment was mutually advantageous. The Commonwealth needed a Latin scholar to conduct state business with Continental government which were reluctant to recognize the English regicides. His lucid composition of government correspondence would not go unnoticed by foreign regimes. For Milton the appointment afforded opportunity to do his share in the cause of just and virtuous government, as we shall presently see.

For a time, Milton held a title without a function. The Council of State was not immediately taxed by any flood of foreign interchange.⁷ To the new Secretary's assignment was added minor ad hoc duties, including the licensing of the official newssheet, Mercurius Politicus. The Stationers' Register for March 17, 1651, reads: "Entered . . . by or - of Master Milton, 6 Pamphletts called, Mercurius Politicus."⁸ It would seem that Milton, the great proponent of an unfettered press, had turned traitor to his own convictions. Perhaps the idealism born of a poet's detachment had given way to an administrative ethos that required registration of newspapers by government bureaucrats, the prior censorship of which Milton himself had felt the sting.

Historians of journalism have not missed the irony, and Milton's reputation as champion of free speech does not survive untarnished. To some he is discredited.⁹ Others seek an explanation in his consistently aristocratic demeanor and partiality to the Puritan Weltanschauung, noting that Milton's elitism and anti-Catholicism had earlier tempered his notion of freedom in the Areopagitica.¹⁰ Emery charitably mentions that Milton's "glory is dimmed somewhat" by his tenure as press licensor.¹¹ Cromwell chose Milton "to preside over the spreading of . . . Cromwellian doctrine . . . and the poet readily agreed," writes John Hohenberg much less charitably.¹² Pickett indicts Milton for becoming the "chief censor" of the Puritan regime.¹³ Pember positively ridicules Milton for not having "the courage of his convictions."¹⁴

Journalists and communication theorists who still find inspiration in Areopagitica will want to examine the record once again. Did Milton compromise the principles laid down in Areopagitica? Was his job as press licensor a denial of freedom and a stroke for government censorship? Often those questions are answered with only meager details in hand and sometimes the conclusions

depend too heavily on sources three or four steps removed from Mercurius Politicus itself. In shaping our response, we have attempted to uncover virtually all the relevant materials and have gathered this information under several lines of inquiry to determine Milton's culpability.

First, what was the nature of his responsibility for Mercurius Politicus? Was he a contributor, editor, or actual censor in the sense that he suppressed news unfriendly to the regime? Second, what was the role of licenser during the early days of the Commonwealth? Can we reconstruct a "job description" based on licensing laws in force at the time? Third, how did Milton reflect upon his involvement with MP, and how did contemporaries accept his role? If those who were eyewitnesses to his licensureship recognized an ethical contradiction, we would have reason to believe that the function he performed was closer to our contemporary notions of censor. Fourth, was Milton true or false to his notions of liberty outside of involvement with MP? A pattern of compromise would lend weight to the negative assessments of his licensureship. The absence of overt compromise would suggest a pattern of integrity that would dispute negative appraisals. Finally, do the facts of Milton's biography during the years 1649-55 provide any clues which warrant the charge of compromise or do they suggest that we redraw the caricatures of Milton in fairer terms?

Research into Milton's responsibility for MP was first done by his major biographer, David Masson, who examined issues of MP from its inception in June, 1650, until the end of 1651 (Milton was licenser of the newsheet from March, 1651, to January, 1652).¹⁵ Masson found bits and pieces of Miltonic style in the 1651 issues, especially in No. 66 (Sept. 4-11), the account of Cromwell's victory at Worcester. In other issues, Masson located what he considered to be Miltonic traces in historical and religious allusions and a higher literary

style than that customarily employed by the newssheet's principle writer and editor, Marchmont Needham. Masson found that the writing in MP took on "increased gravity and dignity" at the end of 1650, a change in tone that was sustained throughout the year of Milton's licensure. Nevertheless, Masson is reluctant to claim that Milton directly controlled much of MP's editorial content. Milton's hand appears, but "in no complete article or long continuous passage have I felt positively sure . . . that I was reading Milton." Masson leaves the matter somewhat undecided, as the two passages that introduce and conclude his research reveal.

One can imagine . . . Needham's weekly visits to the invalid Milton in his Whitehall apartments, bringing the proofs of each forthcoming number of Mercurius with him, and their consultations over the articles, and Milton's occasional criticisms and perhaps suggestions and improvements. For, though nominally a censorship of the Press, the business was in reality only such a friendly superintendence of the witty Needham . . . as Milton might easily reconcile to his principles. How far the superintendence passed actually into a kind of conjoint editorship must, I believe, be left to conjecture.¹⁶

Then, after his review of MP's 1651 issues, Masson concludes:

On the whole, I am quite sure than Milton's connexion with Needham's newspaper was not a merely nominal one, or without effects. If the effects consisted in such a spiritual metamorphosis of Needham as to make a new man of him, that was sufficiently remarkable; but I suspect something more.¹⁷

Masson's original scholarship set the agenda for historians for over a half century. Bourne (1887) repeats Masson's findings of "numberless and unmistakable marks of his [Milton's] influence," though Milton was probably not "more tyrannical" in his censorship than was necessary.¹⁸ Garnett (1890) writes that "nothing but a sense of duty can have reconciled Milton to a task so invidious" as that of censor, although there is some evidence that "he mitigated the severity of the censorship as far as in him lay."¹⁹ Axon (1909)

accepted Masson's research, conceding that Milton's censorship was "in reality a case of editorial supervision."²⁰ Muddiman (1908), writing under the pseudonym J. B. Williams, asserts that Milton was "the acknowledged editor" of MP, though he had "little to do with the writing" of it, aside from an occasional passage or leading article.²¹ Four years later, Muddiman took a more definitive position, arguing that, save for advertising content (chiefly books and medicinal cures), Milton had nothing to do with writing for MP.²²

The debate was not settled, however. Raymond (1932) follows Masson, finding traces of Milton's pen in MP and doubting Needham's capability of achieving the occasional high literary style of the newssheet. Nevertheless, she concludes that Milton's job as licenser was "a supervisory power which he exercised without detriment to his conscience and with benefit to the newsbook."²³

Definitive research on Milton's contributions to MP was finally achieved by French (1936) and Beller (1941-42). In a detailed literary analysis of alleged Miltonic articles, French found

the most plausible supposition is that Milton's participation was limited to occasional paragraphs which he added to articles already written or for which he supplied Needham with suggestions and facts.²⁴

French concludes that Milton's licensing of MP was "perfunctory."

In comparison with a Latin tome [Defensio pro Populo Anglicano, 1651] which should make all Europe ring from one end to the other, the vulgar little weekly Mercuries were petty things not worth a serious thought.²⁵

Beller came to a clearer break with Masson and his followers, suggesting that even French accorded Milton too much credit for editorial input. Beller agrees with French that many alleged Miltonic traces were actually excerpts from Needham's Case of the Common-Wealth,²⁶ and adds that most others were later published in Needham's pamphlet, The Excellence of a Free-State (1656), proving

Needham's authorship in either case.

Examination of the editorials [of Mercurius Politicus] yields no evidence at all that Milton had a hand in any of them, and shows definitely that he had no share in the writing of many of them. There may be echoes of his writings or conversations here and there, but no satisfactory evidence of collaboration We should prefer to think that the position of the author of Areopagitica as "licenser" was purely nominal.²⁷

The conclusion of those who have examined Milton's direct involvement in MP is that he was a kind of absentee editor or bureaucratic advisor, not a propagandist for Cromwell's government. Apparently his contribution during ten months as licenser was largely limited to "occasional paragraphs" added to "articles already written."²⁸

Our second line of inquiry, the reconstruction of the job description of a Commonwealth licenser, involves the complicated history of censorship laws during the early Commonwealth and the often contradictory interpretations given those laws. To make matters more complex, the legal history of the decade 1640-50 is largely a response to the plethora of news journals that arose in support of Parliament on the one hand and of the monarchy on the other.

Siebert's authoritative history traces the collapse in 1640 of the Tudor-Stuart licensing laws and of the Star Chamber, the reinstitution of regulation by Parliament in 1642 (made stricter by further regulations in 1643 and 1647), the Printing Acts of 1649 and 1653, and finally Cromwell's order in August, 1655. But the actual health of journalism during the era is not told exclusively in reference to legal acts. Power plays of various factions, personal influence of second-level officials, and shifts in enforcement measures all contributed to rather amorphous boundaries on the limits and freedoms enjoyed by pamphleteers and journalists.²⁹

For our purposes, the most important document is the Printing Act of 20 September 1649. On the surface, it was a harsh, repressive set of regulations that severely limited the number of legal presses, the production of type cast, and the profitability of the printing trade. All licenses previously issued to newsbooks were withdrawn, and all newsbooks allowed to continue were to be entered in the Stationers' Register. Looking beneath the surface, however, it becomes obvious that the Act was not enforced (until September, 1651), a number of unlicensed newsbooks were permitted to exist, and at least four official journals, including Mercurius Politicus, brought news of the Commonwealth to the people. In such an ill-defined legal mush Milton served as licenser.

The volatile character of this era is reflected in the number of often contradictory attempts to describe it historically. Parker, for example, has suggested that Milton agreed to license MP because he had succeeded in coaxing John Bradshaw toward a broad interpretation of the law.³⁰ Hill cites 1655, not 1649, as the date when repression was again instituted by appointment of a colonel, alderman, and commissioner to regulate printing. The years earlier had been "exuberant days of free discussion [emphasis ours] The author of Areopagitica soon slipped out of the public service" since he no longer felt at home.³¹ Morley also traces rigorous censorship from 1655,³² Symmons drew a clear distinction between full-fledged government licensers and the role Milton played, implying the former disappeared during Cromwell and were not restored until 1662.³³ Noah's summary of legal enactments leading to and during the Commonwealth and Protectorate points up Cromwell's philosophical commitment to the "natural liberty" of a free conscience, a commitment mitigated in 1655 by the Protector's campaign to consolidate and finally institute the goals for which he and the revolutionaries had fought.³⁴

Among historians of journalism, only Elbert Thompson adopts a notion that Cromwell effectively suppressed, controlled, and silenced the English press during the early Commonwealth. However, Thompson's interest is primarily in the decade of the Civil War, and his review of Commonwealth enactments is too sparse to support the weight of his judgments concerning the early period.³⁵

A precise reconstruction of Milton's job description as licenser is not possible, but the evidence at least permits the view that sufficient latitude was available to him so as to force neither the surrender of his lifelong pursuit of liberty nor the contradiction of lofty principles of earlier writings.

Our third line of inquiry asks how Milton himself reflected on his job as licenser, and how his contemporaries accepted his role in view of the principles articulated in Areopagitica. Our review of the literature on this point will be brief, for indeed not much exists. Milton's autobiographical comments are, for the most part, mere snatches and addenda to other writings. His letters were on a philosophical level and infrequently mention events directly pertinent to his life. Nevertheless, in a passage from the Second Defense, a tract published in 1654, we catch a hint of Milton's perception of his role as a government translator and publicist.

I can easily repel any charge which may be adduced against me, either of want of courage or want of zeal . . . With the better part of my frame, I contributed as much as possible to the good of my country, and to the success of the glorious cause in which we were engaged; and I thought that if God willed the success of such glorious achievements, it was equally agreeable to His will that there should be others by whom those achievements should be recorded with dignity and elegance.

Milton did not have a city-room mindset. No dispassionate objectivity or shoulder-shrugging cynicism here. Motivated by a keen sense of liberty clothed in justice, Milton was contributing his talented share to the establishment of

a true commonwealth for which others had expended their resources on the battlefield. Nor is Milton's discernment clouded by infatuation with Cromwell as some historians of journalism imply. A review of his political tracts shows that Milton eventually disbanded hope in one-man rule for a council of virtuous men who would institute and perpetuate just government.

More germane to the present study, however, is the complete lack of autobiographical commentary on Mercurius Politicus. Two conjectural explanations are possible. First, the licensing of MP might have been an embarrassment to Milton. He might have clearly perceived that the job involved him in ideological compromise. This explanation must assert itself in the face of the one persistent theme in all of Milton's political writing, that justice and virtue are to be most prized among good men. To explain Milton's silence on MP as an attempt to cover up a bruised conscience is to hold that he succeeded throughout his life in perpetuating a horrendous double standard, one for those who would attain to the highest human telos, the other for himself. It is difficult to read such hypocrisy into the Miltonic deposit.

A second explanation has at least parsimony on its side, namely, that MP was such a tangential sideline to his interests and obligations as Secretary for the Foreign Tongues that he did not consider personal reflection on it to be warranted. Several considerations favor this explanation. First, it involves no imputation of hypocrisy and allows Milton's moral writing to speak with singular clarity. Second, there is no evidence that Milton's contemporaries challenged his job as a compromise of principle. Had a thoughtful challenge arisen, we would expect some attempt by Milton at personal defense. But we find neither.³⁶ Third, of the reasons suggested by modern historians for Milton's accepting the job as Secretary, none entertains the notion that Milton surrendered his

self-respect in the sense that he blatantly compromised principle.³⁷ Parker implies that Milton may have been motivated by the hope of effecting reform, in which case Milton's silence as to his motives might have been the path of political expediency--but for the sake of virtue and not subterfuge or manipulation.³⁸ It is dangerous to attach much weight to an argument from silence, and we are cautious not to rely on conjecture. We suggest only that the pattern of this third line of inquiry fits acceptably into the body of the data examined thus far. There is no autobiography or contemporaneous history that posits a compromise or contradiction in Milton's principles of free speech and thought.³⁹

Our fourth line of inquiry--whether Milton was true or false to his notions of liberty outside of his involvement in Politicus--is a topic too broad for detailed examination here. We have already alluded to the fact that Milton's consistent appeal for justice and virtue in all his political tracts puts his doctrine of liberty into a context that modern libertarians might find confining. Milton's liberty was not at the expense of or outside the constraints of the right, the good, and the just. Liberty had always a context.⁴⁰ Though succeeding generations could redraw the boundaries of right and wrong, the principle that justice is contained in the parameters of virtue still warrants the sounding it received at Milton's hand.⁴¹ At the least, we cannot understand the liberty advocated in Areopagitica without at the same time accounting for the moral dimension which liberty serves and which, for better or worse, Milton regarded as the goal of the Puritan Revolution. But other matters along this line of investigation also deserve noting.

The Dugard affair in 1652 commends the view that Milton stretched the parameters of "acceptable literature" beyond the recommended boundaries of his

day. Soon after Milton registered his last issue of MP, he was called before the Council of State to defend his licensing of the Racovian Catechism, a book printed by William Dugard containing heretical religious doctrine. The Council had ordered the book confiscated, but Dugard appealed on the basis of Milton's official approval. Milton testified to the Council that he had only followed the deepest convictions of his Areopagitica. The matter went before Parliament, which condemned the Catechism as "blasphemous, erroneous, and scandalous." The book was burned, but Milton escaped punishment. It is noteworthy that, following the "indiscretion," Milton's name never again appears on the public ledger as licenser.⁴²

A second incident later in the decade speaks eloquently to the point of Milton's true loyalties. Had they been to the Commonwealth or Protectorate per se, as some who castigate his work with MP infer, we should expect to find the blinded writer also muted as the Restoration of 1660 approached. Instead, Milton issued in March, 1660 (revised and reissued in April) a brief pamphlet entitled "A Ready and Easy Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth." It chastised the English for the apathy that would abandon hard-won victories and give back the country's leadership to the monarchy. The tract may have inspired the Restoration Parliament's order to burn Milton's Eikonoklastes and Defense of the English People. Milton was arrested and held briefly, then released. It was not the course of a devotee who had tied his rising star to the ascendance of a political strong man. Apart from sheer principle, there was little reason for Milton's hopeless and reckless last political statement.

Our final line of inquiry asks whether a consideration of his physical state ought to mitigate criticism of alleged collusion with Cromwell's regime. The chronology of Milton's deteriorating eyesight is somewhat uncertain. Some

call Milton fully blind as early as 1652, the same year he retired from licensing MP. Others date his blindness from 1654, just before the publication of Second Defense and retirement from the Secretaryship. The early date is supported by Milton's own words describing the weakness of his eyesight in 1651.⁴³ But in Second Defense he notes that the assignment to respond to Salmasius's Royal Defense came during a time of ill health and the loss of "my other eye." Milton's left eye was certainly gone by 1651, the other no later than four years after. In addition to blindness, poor health sapped his strength from the very start of his career with MP. In 1651 he wrote:

Even now what health I have is so poor and precarious that I am forced to take up piecemeal, and with a break almost every hour, this piece of composition [Defense of the English People], which otherwise it would have been my duty to prosecute continuously and with unintermitted attention.⁴⁴

Milton was beginning to order his priorities in 1651. Darkening vapors foretold of lightless days approaching. Political tract writing demanded the prime of his unsteady energies. A man in full health working part-time on a weekly tabloid can hardly be a consummate censor. That Milton labored under duress on a variety of assignments corroborates our other indications about the lack of priority with which he attended to Politicus.

Nevertheless, Milton did "license" the newsbook. No mitigating circumstances will erase his name from the Stationers' Register, nor has it been our intention to do so. We have suggested, however, that our typical assertions about Milton's activities need to be enriched with more subtlety and complexity. The stigma attached to Milton's "censoring" of Mercurius Politicus by historians of journalism should be cast in the light of circumstances surrounding his social, political, and personal struggles. When this is done, we see in Milton a figure whose commitment to an ideal--just and virtuous

government--gave him warrant for direct involvement in the political life of the Commonwealth. As to Mercurius Politicus itself, Milton played the role of senior editor, contributing little aside from his bureaucratic imprimatur, a registration procedure that was more than our act of filing for copyright but different in kind from our contemporary stereotype of an authoritarian press censor.

Milton's appeal for liberty in Areopagitica was the voice of a reformer, not strictly a theoretician. A reformer can "stand against" or "work from within." Milton chose the latter; his choice should not be interpreted as contradiction or even compromise. The historical record will not bear the weight of that charge.

NOTES

1. Milton did not speak before Parliament, nor is it likely he ever intended to. The subtitle of Areopagitica nevertheless reads, "A Speech for the Liberty..." It is a suggestive comment on the notion that oral communication, as opposed to written, carries the heavier task of cultural reform. (Innis, Empire and Communication, 1950).

2. The writings of Bastwick, Lilburne, and Brooke were "more congenial to contemporary minds" and predated Milton. William Haller, ed. Tracts on Liberty in the Puritan Revolution: 1638-1647, 3 vols. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1934), 1:7.

3. Despite their liberal tone, the tracts do not fair well today because of their disregard for the rights of the female partner. Characteristically, Milton did not phrase his argument apart from the passions that contributed to its formulation.

4. Enforcement of the Ordinance for the regulation of printing enacted by Parliament on June 14, 1643 was never rigid. Weighted by the bureaucratic machinery of Parliament, the Ordinance was more a sieve than a dike.

5. Edwin Emery and Michael Emery, The Press and America: An Interpretive History of Journalism, 4th ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1978), 8. Fredrick S. Siebert, Freedom of the Press in England, 1474-1776: The Rise and Decline of Government Controls (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1965), 197. Elbert N. S. Thompson, "War Journalism Three Hundred Years Ago," Publications of the Modern Language Association of America 35, New Series 28 (1920): 115. See also Warren K. Agee, Phillip H. Ault, and Edwin Emery, Introduction to Mass Communication, 5th ed. (New York: Harper and Row, 1976), 31; Herbert Brucker, Freedom of Information (New York: Macmillan, 1949), 33-4.

Historians are not univocal in their praise, of course. For less laudatory evaluations of Areopagitica, see Joseph Muddiman [J. B. Williams], A History of English Journalism to the Foundation of the Gazette (1908), 61-2; Jay Jensen, Liberalism, Democracy and the Mass Media (1959), 52-3; Jay Jensen, "The Tradition of Freedom in American Journalism," Publizistik Als Gesellschaftswissenschaft (1973), 252; and Leonard Levy, ed., Freedom of the Press from Zenger to Jefferson (1966), xx-xxi.

6. Godwin suggests that Bradshaw's influence on behalf of Milton was a result of their kinship. History of the Commonwealth of England (1827), 2:78, 3:36.

7. The idea that Milton was "kept busy" by the Council of State during times when foreign correspondence was slack is suggested by David Masson, "Local Memories of Milton," Good Words 34 (1893): 138.

8. G.E.B. Eyrie and G.R. Rivington, A Transcript of the Stationers' Register: 1640-1708 A.D., 3 vols. (London; Privately printed, 1913), 1:362.

9. Muddiman, "The Beginnings of English Journalism," The Cambridge History of English Literature (1933), 7:403.

10. Jensen, Liberalism, Democracy and the Mass Media, 53; William M. Clyde, The Struggle for the Freedom of the Press from Caxton to Cromwell (St. Andrews: University Press, 1934), 79-80.

11. Emery and Emery, The Press and America, 13.

12. John Hohenberg, Free Press, Free People: The Best Cause (New York: The Free Press, 1973), 24.

13. Calder M. Pickett, Voices of the Past: Key Documents in the History of American Journalism (Columbus, Ohio: Grid, Inc., 1977), 8.

14. Don R. Pember, Mass Media in America, 2nd ed. (Chicago: Science Research Associates, Inc., 1977), 78.

15. J. Milton French suggests the probability that Milton's tenure of licenser began before his name appears in the Stationers' Register and extends until perhaps the end of 1652. "Milton, Needham, and Mercurius Politicus," Studies in Philology 33 (1936): 238.
16. David Masson, The Life of John Milton, 5 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1877), 4:326.
17. Masson, 4:335.
18. H. R. Fox Bourne, English Newspapers: Chapters in the History of Journalism, 2 vols. (London: Chatto and Windus, 1887), 1:21-22.
19. Richard Garnett, Life of John Milton (London: Walter Scott, 1890), 105.
20. William E. A. Axon, Milton and the Liberty of the Press (London: Adlard and Son, 1909), 11.
21. Muddiman, A History of English Journalism, 134-5.
22. "John Milton, Journalist" in Living Age, July 20, 1912. Kennedy Jones (Fleet Street and Downing Street, 1919) accepts Muddiman's thesis. Muddiman also argues that Needham had been replaced as editor of MP by John Hall by the time Milton became the newssheet's editor. The view has not won the support of most researchers. The idea is specifically repudiated by French, "Milton, Needham, and Mercurius Politicus," 245.
23. Dora Neill Raymond, Oliver's Secretary: John Milton, in an Era of Revolt (New York: Minton, Balch, 1932), 154.
24. "Milton, Needham, and Mercurius Politicus," 245.
25. Ibid., 246.
26. The Case appeared on May 8, 1650, and was the chief reason why Needham, the former royalist, was, on May 24, appointed editor of Mercurius Politicus.
27. Elmer A. Beller, "Milton and Mercurius Politicus," Huntington Library Quarterly 5 (1941-42): 486.

28. The consensus of French and Beller is accepted by Douglas Bush, John Milton: A Sketch of His Life and Writings (1968); Joseph Frank, The Beginnings of the English Newspaper (1961); Jim Allee Hart, Views on the News: The Developing Editorial Syndrome (1970); and William Riley Parker, Milton: A Biography (1968). No scholar (to our knowledge) who has examined the primary sources since French and Beller has objected to their findings.

29. Siebert describes the period: "Restrictions more despotic than those of the Star Chamber followed by periods with no discernible regulations, enforcement at one moment stringent and at the next completely absent, hand-in-glove cooperation with the Stationers Company and a few months later the complete exclusion of the trade organization from official duties, licensing and then no licensing, newsbooks with a wide latitude in reporting public affairs and then no newsbooks at all except "official" ones--all these conditions are to be found during the decade (1650-1660) preceding the restoration of the monarchy." Freedom of the Press in England, 1476-1776, 219-220.

30. Milton: A Biography, 2:955.

31. Christopher Hill, God's Englishman: Oliver Cromwell and the English Revolution (New York: Dial, 1970), 149.

32. John Morley, Oliver Cromwell (London: Macmillan, 1901), 390.

33. Charles Symmons, The Prose Works of John Milton, vol. 7: The Life of John Milton (London: Several private individuals, 1806), 459n.

34. James E. Noah, "Oliver Cromwell, Protector, and the English Press," Journalism Quarterly 39 (Winter 1962): 61.

35. "War Journalism Three Hundred Years Ago," 93-115. Interpretation, of course, is the privilege of the historian. Macauley speaks for those who argue that however repressive Cromwell may seem in comparison to modern

democracy, the legitimate comparison is between Cromwell and his contemporary alternatives. "The choice lay, not between Cromwell and liberty, but between Cromwell and the Stuarts. That Milton chose well, no man can doubt who fairly compares the events of the protectorate with those of the thirty years which succeeded it, the darkest and most disgraceful in English annals." Macauley's Essay on Milton, Charles W. French, ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1920), 68.

36. That Areopagitica went largely unnoticed is made clear by Haller, Tracts on Liberty (1934), and Robert W. Cox, "Milton's Areopagitica: An Analytical and Historical Study with Implications for the College Teacher." Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1955. By 1652, however, the tract was familiar to "a number of England's legislators," Parker, Milton, 1:395.

37. Siebert suggests that Milton might have changed his views on censorship between 1644 and 1650. There is no evidence for the notion, and Siebert himself prefers the idea that Milton never intended the principles in Areopagitica to cover newsbooks, a view taken by Clyde (1934) and implied by Alexander Andrews, The History of British Journalism (1859). The critical nature of this latter point rests on the assumption that Milton regarded the function of newsbooks to be much the same as our notion of the function of newspapers. The assumption is not at all certain, especially in view of the fact that Milton's journalism and ours are markedly dissimilar in ideological tone and intent. Andrews mentions the lack of respect accorded to newspapers of that era.

38. Parker, Milton, 1:354. Parker portrays Milton not as a weakling but as a shrewd crusader who knew the limits to which his principles of liberty could be publicly applied.

39. Masson notes that "we have no attestation anywhere by Milton himself that he contributed to Needham's journal," Life of John Milton, 4:334.

40. An excellent presentation of Milton's moral context is found in Arthur E. Barker, Milton and the Puritan Dilemma, 1641-1660. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1942.

41. As a matter of fact, the relationship between justice and virtue is so crucial to understanding Milton, that we will develop that connection in detail in a subsequent study. In addition to his contributions to no previous restraint, Milton articulated the principle worth debating yet today that human freedom can be founded neither on natural man nor kings, but on the virtuous.

42. Parker, Milton, 1:395 and J. Milton French, ed. The Life Records of John Milton, 3 vols. (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1949-1954), 3:206.

43. Life Records of John Milton, 2:339.

44. Life Records of John Milton, 2:338.